

## House Republican Press Release

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### **Rep. Cafero Wants to Strengthen Town Officials' Role in Municipal Employee Contract Disputes**



HARTFORD – House Deputy Minority Leader Lawrence F. Cafero Jr. R-142, has proposed legislation to strengthen the ability of municipal legislative bodies to intervene in local binding arbitration cases involving municipal employees.

The draft bill released today would clearly define the roles that local officials, legislative bodies and town meetings would play in deciding whether to challenge binding arbitration awards. Cafero said that he expects the legislation will be raised this legislative session.

“We must address this loophole in the current law because it has led to some interpretations that appear incongruous,” Cafero said. “When we last changed the law more than 10 years ago, we believed that the roles of local legislative bodies and officials in these matters were resolved.”

Cafero’s legislation would allow local officials involved in binding arbitration cases with employee unions to intervene in the contracting process, even if they are not the designated legislative body. This loophole came to Cafero’s attention when the Norwalk teachers’ contract, negotiated between the Board of Education and the teachers’ union, was rejected by the Norwalk Common Council.

When the Norwalk Common Council wanted to make themselves a party to the proceedings they were shut out of the process under current law. The arbitrator deemed the Board of Education to be the city’s representative. Since the Board of Education had already agreed to the contract with the union, the subsequent arbitration process became a mere formality and the contract was adopted.

“The council’s arguments were never heard,” Cafero said.

Towns and cities have multiple forms of government, from town meetings to boards of selectmen and councils, the roles that each body plays in the binding arbitration process may be unsettled.

“This legislation would clear up any issues,” Cafero added.

Cafero also said he was disappointed that the previously pledged support of some Democrats in the Norwalk legislative delegation failed to materialize after the bill was drafted. “During the fall campaign I had secured bipartisan support for this bill because it is the right thing to do for Norwalk and its citizens. Unfortunately, that has not happened to date,” Cafero said.